



EXHIBIT 10
DATE 4/3/13
SB 298

TO: Montana House Health & Human Services Committee,
David Howard, Chair and Representatives

DATE: April 3, 2013

RE: **SB 298**

The Montana Legislature created the Montana Children's Trust Fund (CTF) in 1985 to address prevention of child abuse and neglect. The MT CTF's mission is to strengthen and support Montana Families. We believe that Montana's children are the State's greatest assets. Today's children are the leaders of tomorrow. We hold their future in our hands, and our future is in their hands.

The MT CTF is Montana's lead agency for child abuse and neglect prevention. The MT CTF stops abuse before it occurs by providing primary and secondary community-based prevention services. The MT CTF Board is a quasi-public entity, consisting of seven volunteer members appointed by the Governor. The MT CTF is administratively attached to the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (MT DPHHS).

The MT CTF's current Board Chair, Betty Hidalgo, R.N., is also a Member on the National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds Board, where she represents the MT CTF. In April, Betty received the 2012 Commissioner's Award in Washington D.C for leadership and commitment in the prevention of child abuse and neglect. As a Board, we are committed to staying on the cutting edge of evidence-based practices.

As detailed in the Fact Sheet, Montana receives approximately \$200,000 annually from the federal Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention grant (CBCAP), which is allocated nationwide based upon the population of children under age eighteen residing in a state. According to the 2011 Montana Kids Count Data Book, approximately 223,563 children under the age of eighteen reside in the Montana. The State provides twenty percent matching funds for CBCAP through special revenues. The 2007 Legislative Session appropriated \$1,000,000 to the Children's Endowment Fund which the MT CTF administers through use of interest on the principle. Annual interest earnings are approximately \$40,000.

The MT CTF annually issues grants to eligible community-based programs and community family resource centers across the state. The MT CTF Board reviews all Grant Proposals after the initial review by the MT DPPHS procurement office. The MT CTF Board evaluates and grants awards and contracts after careful review of each organization's capacity and readiness to carry out the proposed project's goal.

We all know the devastating effects of Shaken Baby Syndrome in our State and Nation. The MT CTF Board was extremely pleased that the 2009 Legislature passed a law requiring education on Shaken Baby Syndrome, also known as Abusive Head Trauma (SBS/AHT.) The MT CTF Board initially funded the evidence-based program, The Period of Purple Crying in Montana. The Period of Purple Crying Program educates new parents and stakeholders on the normal phases of

infant crying, the most common trigger for SBS/AHT. The MT DPHHS has supplemented that funding to help bring the program to a statewide level. The MT CTF Board is committed to this program and other early prevention programs starting prenatally through adolescence. We recognize the extreme importance of prevention and early intervention. We will continue to provide parental support and education in the protective factors for families. Prevention of adverse childhood effects are recognized throughout our programs.

The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Study shows early experiences set the developmental trajectory for lifelong learning and health. The MT CTF board has been acutely aware of the importance of early adverse childhood experiences on infant brain development. Positive early experiences promote healthy brain development. For example, by age three, eighty percent of the body's neural construction is complete. Early environmental factors and experiences shape the brain's architecture, fostering or inhibiting healthy cognitive and physical development. Studies show three levels of stress response in children: positive, tolerable, and toxic. Toxic stress, such as exposure to violence, physical or emotional neglect, caregiver substance abuse or mental illness, can cause physiological changes that disrupt development of brain circuits, damage learning and memory, and suppress the body's immune response system resulting in vulnerability to infection and chronic health problems. Studies show that adverse, early experiences often lead to babies and children with learning, health, and behavioral issues resulting in physical disabilities, learning disabilities, developmental disabilities, increase need for special education and health services among others. Later in life, the physiological changes caused by toxic stress result in increased rates of adult ischemic heart disease, liver disease, hypertension, anxiety disorders, depression, alcoholism, and coronary obstructive pulmonary disease.

Adverse childhood experiences can also have major impacts for Montana in terms of increased social and economic costs. Likewise, parent education and income levels can substantially affect their children's well-being. According to New York Times columnist David Brooks, "By age five, it is possible to predict with depressing accuracy, who will complete high school and college and who won't." It does not have to be this way. With your help, communities can protect at-risk infants and toddlers and support their families by providing high quality early care and education. Early childhood investments yield the highest economic returns. Yet we invest the least at the time of greatest impact. We need to ensure that all Montana children start kindergarten ready and able to succeed. This is an economic imperative. All children need and have the right to be raised in a safe, loving, and nurturing environment and it only makes sense that this will help the State both socially and economically.

The MT CTF pledges to make a difference in early brain development, as science proves it a good investment of our monies. While we regret not being able to fund all interested Montana communities in some way, this year the MT CTF board provided grants to thirteen community-based programs. In addition, the MT CTF's first state-wide initiative is the Period of Purple Crying shaken baby prevention program.

We all know this work is not done by one person, but by a caring team of partners that know more steps must be taken to help the most vulnerable - our children. We must be their voice. It is our obligation to their future as well as to ours.

Please know that the MT CTF Board stands ready to assist however possible to help our most vulnerable children. Thank you for the opportunity to share the work of the Montana Children's Trust Fund with you today.

Montana Children's Trust Fund Board- Chair: Betty Hidalgo; Mary Gallagher-Vice Chair

Strengthening & Supporting Montana Families